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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Letter dated 1 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the statement of the State Minister's Office on conflict-resolution issues, dated 31 May 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 27.

(*Signed*) Irakli **Alasania**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

07-36854 (E) 080607

Annex to the letter dated 1 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the State Minister's Office of Georgia on conflict-resolution issues

At the meeting of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on 12 and 13 February 2007, the Georgian side presented its proposals aimed at promoting confidence-building between the sides, advancing peace negotiations and a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

Since then, the Georgian side has many times proposed to arrange a bilateral meeting with the Abkhaz side, without any preconditions, in order to discuss the issues of security and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, who are of paramount importance to us. Despite our efforts, the Abkhaz side refuses this meeting and, in general, any other contact that might provide us with an opportunity to discuss the issues under review.

This is particularly alarming when, in compliance with Security Council resolutions on Abkhazia, Georgia, it is necessary to commence direct activities relating to human rights issues and the deployment of the United Nations civil police component in the Gali region. In this context, the absence of dialogue between the sides is completely unacceptable. We therefore call upon the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General to immediately urge the Abkhaz side to engage in such a dialogue.

In addition, it should be noted that the artificial obstacles that have arisen with regard to the issues of security and return of internally displaced persons and refugees have negatively affected other spheres, too. In particular, for a number of months, the Abkhaz side, while presenting no major justification, refuses to participate in the rehabilitation programme financed by the European Community for the conflict zone and, using unfounded demands, impedes the work of the Steering Committee. This also reflects a clear trend.

Against this background, on 17 May 2007, representatives of the Sukhumi regime disseminated alarming information related to the key problem of the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. Namely, it was noted that a resolution entitled "Legal status of persons who left Abkhazia due to Georgia's aggressive war against Abkhazia in 1992-1993" was currently under consideration in the "parliament" of the Sukhumi regime. Actually, the main goal of the draft is to legitimize the results of the ethnic cleansing against the predominantly Georgian population, condemned by the summit documents of Budapest (1994), Lisbon (1996) and Istanbul (1999) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and, through preventive actions, to rule out the possibility of return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the entire territory of Abkhazia, an obligation many times confirmed by the Sukhumi regime.

We have to remind you that the Abkhaz side in conflict has admitted the main principles and obligations for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, and that this issue has always been a priority of the peace process and the focus of a number of documents related to

conflict-resolution issues. In particular, this issue concerns all Security Council resolutions, from 876 (1993) to 1752 (2007); all agreements reached by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides under the aegis of the United Nations; the decisions on Abkhazia, Georgia, adopted at the summits of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the CIS mandate on the peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia (21 October 1994 and 26 May 1995); the Moscow quadrilateral agreement on the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons of 4 April 1994; the Moscow agreement on a ceasefire and the separation of forces of 14 May 1994; the Yalta Declaration of 2001; and, finally, agreements reached within the Geneva format.

We have to stress once again that the manipulations of the Abkhaz side on issues relating to internally displaced persons and refugees, including the rhetoric of the Sukhumi regime's representatives, are nothing but targeted attempts to declare null and void all agreements that have been reached since 1993.

Based on the aforementioned facts, we consider it necessary to urge the Special Representative and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to convene, as soon as possible, a "Geneva format" meeting in Geneva, in order to discuss, with direct participation of the sides in conflict, the possibilities and priorities for the continuation of the peace process which will involve dialogue on security issues; the realization of the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to voluntarily return to the entire territory of Abkhazia; matters related to economic and humanitarian dimensions; and the economic rehabilitation of the region.

For its part, the Georgian side remains ready to cooperate in the above issues with all stakeholders and once again confirms its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.